

Article - Natural Resources

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§5-9B-06.

(a) The Department of Natural Resources shall:

(1) Provide technical support and assistance to local governments in the development of local land preservation programs, including mapping, and identification of smaller parcels that may be aggregated for protection under local land preservation programs;

(2) Adopt criteria for distributing available State funding to local land preservation programs in accordance with the purposes of this subtitle;

(3) Assist sponsors to coordinate land preservation efforts in their regions under local land preservation and recreation plans with related efforts under Program Open Space, the Rural Legacy Program, the Heritage Area Program, the Agricultural Land Preservation Program, and the GreenPrint Program; and

(4) Consult with other federal, State, and local units and private land trusts in order to facilitate conservation efforts under this subtitle.

(b) The purposes of the criteria adopted under subsection (a) of this section include:

(1) Preservation of open space;

(2) Containment of sprawl development; and

(3) Improvement of water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and other watersheds of the State.

(c) The criteria shall be based on:

(1) The current population of participating jurisdictions and adjacent areas;

(2) Projected population growth in those areas;

(3) The sensitivity of surface and ground waters in and derived from those areas to degradation from point and nonpoint source pollution; and

(4) Giving higher priority to applications for the protection of lands and land uses that provide the highest level of protection for water quality.

(d) The criteria shall be used at the start of each fiscal year to allocate funding available to local programs in participating local governments in order to provide for appropriate and timely deliberation and review of eligible proposals for acquisition by each participating local government.

(e) The Department may initially establish allocations of available funding based on the funding that is made available to each participating local government under Program Open Space in the same proportion that the local government receives Program Open Space funding in relation to the Program Open Space allocations of all participating local governments.

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